

Machray, Robert.

SERMON

—OF THE—

Most Rev. The Bishop of Rupert's Land,

WARDEN OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE,

—TO THE—

Boys of St. John's College School

—AT THE—

SUNDAY+AFTERNOON+SCHOOL+SERVICE,

December 9, 1883.

AFTER THE DEATH OF

PEMBROKE PASSAND HERGHMER,

OF THE III FORM

—AND+A+SCHOLAR+OF+THE+COLLEGE.—

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HEBREWS 9, 27.

"It is appointed unto men once to die."

Dear Young Friends,

My subject may be felt as a sad one, and especially sad to-day. We would rather put it from us. But perhaps it may be profitable not to do so. It is well to look the truth in the face. The Text tells us what the youngest of us cannot afford to ignore. The words of the Apostle, I have read to you, speak to us of what he says is laid up for each of us—for all men. It is the lot appointed for us by that loving Father, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Let us not forget that we are all born to die. The youngest of you already knows what death means. Perhaps you are fortunate enough to belong to a family circle which in your memory it has never touched. When you meet together, father and mother, brothers and sisters, not a chair is vacant by the hearth. Still you have seen death in some form or another. You have probably seen the little bird fall quivering, then the little body has become motionless, helpless, lifeless, cold. That was death. You can understand then the sad meaning, when this comes to one of ourselves. And before you are many years older you will experience its bitterness, as dear friends and companions, one by one, pass from you. I am not yet very old, yet all my teachers of school-days are gone. Of all the Professors in the first university I attended, not one is now alive. Many, very many, of my school-fellows and college friends, and the large proportion of friends older than myself, are no more. Thus life passes on, till, if a man reaches three-score years and ten, he finds himself almost alone of all he knew in boyhood or youth, and he feels he must soon be with them. There was said to be a chamber in a prison-house in the middle ages so contrived that, every day, machinery, that introduced into the chamber the food the prisoner required, lessened its dimensions, so that at length the prisoner was made to feel that, after so many days more or less, the walls would come together and crush him. So each day of life leads on towards the day of death. Our Fathers, where are they?

But this fact of the certainty of death should come more seriously home to us when we consider the uncertainty of the event. We know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. How true the words of the Burial Service in the Prayer book—"In the midst of life, we are in death." This, I am sure, we must all to-day feel very deeply. Last midsummer there was among you in school a little boy, so bright, joyous, and interesting, that he was a general favorite with you all. And he was as sharp and attentive at his lessons as he was hearty when out of school. He was dux of his Form and giving much promise. He went home in the fulness of boyish spirits. There was diptheria in the neighborhood of his family. In a few days he fell ill of it and in another day or two he passed away. He sleeps now, according to his last wish to his parents, in the churchyard outside of us, so that he might be near you. And, now, we mourn sadly another loss, and again that of a boy loved by you all, one of the scholars of the school, a model boy in all his conduct and bearing, a scholar of promise. He was scarcely a week ill. Only a few days ago no boy seemed healthier and brighter. A slight pain in the ankle, then the symptoms of inflammatory rheumatism, then, that most serious complication in this disease, the passing of it to the region of the heart, then weakness, exhaustion, death. This is the first death in the College buildings since I succeeded the Bishop of Saskatchewan as Warden and Head Master, some 12 or 13 years ago, though there have been two or three deaths at their homes of boys who but for illness would have been at school. The health we have enjoyed has been a cause of much thankfulness. Few families of five and six members are without sickness now and then. Though we have had so many boys we have had very little serious sickness, and we now mourn the first death. It is a great pleasure to have young people about us; the one draw-back is the grave responsibility and the oppressing sadness that are felt when serious sickness enters. But we cannot hope in this world to escape this trial. There comes a time in the life of every one, of whatever station, when medical skill is powerless, when the wealth of Croesus cannot prolong life for a single hour, when the most loving affection can only look on sorrowful and helpless. "Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets."

We read in the Word of God, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." This is pre-eminently true, doubtless, of the ways of God in leading us to love Him, and of our dim realizing, as in an image and not in reality, of

all that God gives His Children by the way and is preparing for them above. But it is also true of God's ways in Providence. We can trace the hand and hear the voice of God, but beyond that often all is a mystery to us. We can only say, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seemeth Him good." The youth of virtuous character and bright promise is cut down. So is the flower often broken off from its stalk when it has only begun to show forth its loveliness and breathe out its fragrance. But we see the same in the larger world. How often has the Church of Christ itself had to mourn the extinction of a life which seemed to the limited view of man almost necessary for the very work and glory of the Saviour. Thus has it been taught the lesson, God is continually giving to His Saints, when they fancy, that but for certain hindrances and difficulties, they might more cheerfully and usefully labor for Him. "My Grace is sufficient for Thee. My strength is made perfect in weakness." Often must we satisfy ourselves with the truths—"God doeth all things well." "He maketh all things work together for good to those that are His." And He is very gracious with us in our difficulties and darkness. He encourages us to make His actions, as they affect us, the subject of prayer to Him just as we feel them. This was the way not only with St. Paul, who besought the Lord again and again that the thorn in the flesh might depart from him, but with our blessed Lord Himself, who in His perfect Humanity prayed, "Father, save me from this hour," and again, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me." But while we are encouraged to tell out all our wants just as we feel them to God, as a child to a loving Father, yet this should be the spirit of our approach—"Yet not my will, but Thine be done."

We have been looking at the sad side of death. It cannot be robbed of this sadness in the passing. But let us not misunderstand this. Earthly partings of a temporary kind have often a sadness even when the heart has joy. The parting of a bride from her father, mother and family is often very bitter; though in the hearts of all there may be a welling forth of pleasure and satisfaction. So in our departure from the world and the separation from those we love there must be a sadness. There must also be a deep gravity from the exceeding solemnity of the circumstances, that attend death. We pass by it from the known to the unknown. A world, now unseen, is about to burst on the view of the soul. The endless stretch of eternity with its deep mysteries is about to open out to us. But, my dear young friends, though there is a sad and though there is

so solemn a side to death, there is also a very bright side. Though St. Paul thought that to abide in the flesh was more needful for the church, yet he had a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Death after all, in view of the great future, is but a light affliction, which may be truly said to be but for a moment, but beyond it there is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The children of God know that, if their earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. St. Paul well expressed then the feeling of most servants of God, when he said "not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." The unclothing has its sadness, but the clothing upon speaks of an endless life. How glowing the picture in the close of the Bible of the Home that is in Heaven: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." And again "There shall be no night there: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever."

Brief life is here our portion,
Brief sorrow, short-lived care,
The life that knows no ending,
The tearless life is there.
O happy retribution!
Short toil! Eternal rest!
For mortals and for sinners
A mansion with the bless'd!"

My dear young friends it is at once my duty and my privilege to assure you that God freely offers to us all that He is preparing for His people and is ready by the Spirit to fit us for it. God, by this late trial, as by many a Providence before it, is saying to every one of us "Seek ye my face"—May we reply "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Let me say a few words to help you in this.

First I bid you cherish a loving trust in God. That is the secret of all true seeking after God. We must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Assure yourselves that God is Love. Our reason tells us this. Day by day we experience it. But how wonderful the dimensions of the love the Bible discloses. He spared not from us His own Son. Surely in Him He must be ready to give us all

things! Loving trust in God is what He asks of us and, if this is seated in our hearts, it will bring to us in due time all we need.

Next I bid you accustom yourselves to daily, frequent prayer for pardon. In all things we come short. When we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants. Too often we sin in thought, in word, in deed. Bring yourselves then often to the mercy seat. Tell out to God your weakness and wrongdoings, and seek anew the cleansing of your souls by the Lamb's blood. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Finally I bid you ask God for Grace to serve Him. Set your heart on this day by day. Ask for special help when you feel special need. Whatever else you are, be first a servant of God. Seek to be honorable, truthful, pure, and manly in your daily life. Every day of victory in such a course makes victory next day easier. This will not only secure a blessing for yourselves—even that inward peace and hope, that none of us in this world of sin and death should dare to be without—but you will be a blessing to all around you. And in seeking grace from God bear in mind, that He has given us special means by which we may specially hope for grace. Enter with your heart into the public prayers of the school and church as well as your own private prayers. And, if you are older and have been confirmed, prepare yourselves, when you have the opportunity, for coming to the Lord's Table. That will give you, if you seek it, grace to have a right tone and spirit in all your life and studies. And, now, my young friends, I have only to express the hope that the great grief, that has led to these remarks, may be sanctified to the friends of the departed and to all of us. May we be made more conscious of what is the one thing needful, more real in our spiritual life, more thoughtful of the interests of our souls. Here we shall sadly miss him that has gone. It is not a small loss in a school to lose a boy who had every quality to make him, by and by, when a little older, a leader and to lead well, obedient to authority, attentive to the rules of the school, faithful in his school work, having the courage of his opinions, and a gentleman in feeling and demeanor. In another year he would have been in the fourth Form and we looked forward to his example being of the greatest value. But it has been otherwise ordered and we cannot but feel, that, if we miss him, how sadly he must be missed in that home, where he was the only surviving son, a

most dutiful and loving son. But it is our hope that what is our loss is his gain, and he has only gone before. He is still alive to us. If we live on, we shall have other friends following him. The quiet land should seem more dear, as one after another passing away, makes it more a home. We believe in the Communion of Saints. When we pray to God we draw near Him, with whom they are. We know not how close they come to us or what knowledge or interest they continue to have as regards us and things below. God has allowed a veil to fall over this. But we can think of what God is doing for them, and what they do for God.

"O Lord, by whom all souls live, we thank Thee for those, whom Thy love has called from the life of trial to the life of rest. We trust them to Thy care. We pray Thee, that, by Thy grace, we may be brought to enjoy with them the endless life of glory.

God would not have us from them part,
But cling to them with tenderest love,
That they may upward draw our hearts
To seek the things that are above."

And, now, to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, one Lord, be ascribed all the honor, and glory, dominion and power, and praise, now and ever. Amen.

